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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 04 HARARE 000939

SIPDIS

AID FOR DCHA/FFP LANDIS, CRUMBLY, MUTAMBA, PETERSEN
DCHA/OFDA FOR KHANDAGLE, BORNS, HALMRAST-SANCHEZ
AFR FOR COPSON, FORT, BAKER, MACNAIRN
STATE/AF FOR RAYNOR, DELISI
PRETORIA FOR DIJKERMAN, HELM, DISKIN
NAIROBI FOR DEPREZ, RILEY, HALE
LILONGWE FOR RUBEY
LUSAKA FOR GUNTHER
MAPUTO FOR POLAND, BLISS
MASERU FOR BELLEGARDE
MBABANE FOR KENNA
ROME FOR FODAG

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [EAID](#) [EAGR](#) [EFIN](#) [PREL](#) [US](#) [ZI](#)

SUBJECT: POOR 2003 AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION
PROSPECTS MEAN CONTINUED FOOD INSECURITY IN
ZIMBABWE

SUMMARY

1. A USAID BUREAU FOR DEMOCRACY CONFLICT AND HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE (DCHA) PRELIMINARY RAPID ASSESSMENT OF PROSPECTS FOR THE CURRENT HARVEST CONCLUDED THAT PARTS OF ZIMBABWE ONCE AGAIN FACE FAILED HARVESTS AND LIMITED MARKET ACCESS TO FOOD DUE TO A COMBINATION OF POOR RAINFALL, COMMERCIAL FARM CLOSURES, LACK OF INPUTS, AND COUNTER PRODUCTIVE FOOD MARKETING POLICIES. ADDITIONALLY, THE GMB IS EXPECTED TO HAVE LESS CAPACITY (FOREX) TO IMPORT FOOD OVER THE NEXT TWELVE MONTHS.

2. WHILE IT IS ANTICIPATED THAT NATIONAL AGGREGATE PRODUCTION WILL BE MARKEDLY HIGHER THAN LAST YEAR, IT IS DOUBTFUL THAT THE FOOD SECURITY SITUATION WILL IMPROVE FOR MANY HOUSEHOLDS, PARTICULARLY IN THE SOUTH WHERE MUCH OF THE CEREAL CROP HAS BEEN A COMPLETE WRITE-OFF. MISGUIDED GOZ MARKET POLICIES CONTINUE TO MAKE IT DIFFICULT TO ACCESS MAIZE AND WHEAT IN MARKETS, AFFECTING NEARLY EVERYONE IN THE COUNTRY. GENERAL ECONOMIC DECLINE, POLITICAL TUMULT AND HIV/AIDS ALL CONTRIBUTE TO THE DIFFICULT FOOD SECURITY SITUATION. DIFFERING CROP FORECASTS HAVE RECENTLY BEEN ISSUED BY THE GOVERNMENT OF ZIMBABWE, THE FAMINE EARLY WARNING SYSTEM NETWORK AND THE COMMERCIAL FARMERS UNION, RANGING FROM 800,000 MT TO 1.5 MILLION MT. ALTHOUGH MORE DEFINITIVE ASSESSMENT RESULTS ARE STILL SEVERAL WEEKS AWAY [SEE MISSION COMMENT, PARA 16.], INFORMATION AVAILABLE TO POST AT THIS POINT SUGGESTS THAT MANY COMMUNAL FARMERS WILL REMAIN DEPENDENT ON FOOD AID FOR MUCH OF 2003. IT IS NOT POSSIBLE TO PROVIDE A BINDING ESTIMATE OF NEED UNTIL FINAL HARVEST FIGURES BECOME AVAILABLE.

3. IN MOST AREAS, FOOD AID NEEDS WILL BE REDUCED AS A RESULT OF THE MAY/JUNE HARVEST. DURING THIS TIME, FOCUS SHOULD BE ON IMPROVED TARGETING OF FOOD AID, INCLUDING FOOD-FOR-WORK, TO REACH THE MOST VULNERABLE MORE EFFECTIVELY. NON-FOOD ASSISTANCE PRIORITIES INCLUDE SEEDS AND OTHER INPUTS FOR COMMUNAL FARMERS, AND SUPPORT FOR U.N. HUMANITARIAN COORDINATION AND MONITORING. END SUMMARY.

OVERVIEW OF ASSESSMENT MISSION

4. AS PART OF A LARGER USAID REGIONAL ASSESSMENT TO DETERMINE EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE NEEDS FOR 2003/04, TWO TEAMS COMPOSED OF OFFICERS FROM THE OFFICES OF FOOD FOR PEACE (FFP) AND U.S. FOREIGN DISASTER ASSISTANCE (OFDA) AND A FAMINE EARLY WARNING SYSTEM (FEWSNET) ADVISOR UNDERTOOK A QUALITATIVE FOOD SECURITY ASSESSMENT THROUGHOUT ZIMBABWE MARCH 17 TO 28. TEAMS INTERVIEWED MORE THAN 60 FARMER HOUSEHOLDS IN EIGHT PROVINCES AS WELL AS UN, NGO AND GOZ REPRESENTATIVES. HOUSEHOLD INTERVIEWS FOCUSED ON COMMUNAL AREAS, WITH ONLY A HANDFUL OF INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED IN RESETTLED FARMING AREAS.

PROSPECTS FOR THIS YEAR'S HARVEST

5. THE MAJORITY OF FARMERS INTERVIEWED ESTIMATED THAT THIS YEAR'S HARVEST WOULD BE SOMEWHAT BETTER THAN LAST YEAR'S, WITH PRODUCTION COVERING ZERO TO

SIX MONTHS' NEEDS. OBSERVATIONS OF STANDING CROPS IN THE FIELD CONFIRMED THAT A SUBSTANTIAL NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLDS, PARTICULARLY THOSE IN THE MATABELELAND PROVINCES AND THE SOUTHERN PARTS OF MIDLANDS AND MASVINGO PROVINCES, WOULD REALIZE LITTLE OR NO PRODUCTION THIS YEAR.

16. IN THE GENERALLY MORE PRODUCTIVE PROVINCES OF MASHONALAND (EAST, CENTRAL AND WEST) AND MANICALAND, LATE RAINS IMPROVED PRODUCTION PROSPECTS. TOTAL AREAS PLANTED, HOWEVER, HAVE DECLINED FROM PRIOR HISTORICAL AVERAGES, AND NGOS POINTED OUT NUMEROUS PREVIOUSLY PRODUCTIVE FIELDS LYING IDLE. WHILE THIS SURVEY DID NOT INCLUDE FARMS CONFISCATED UNDER THE FAST-TRACK LAND REDISTRIBUTION PROGRAM, SOURCES INTERVIEWED INDICATED THAT PRODUCTION LEVELS ON THESE FARMS, WHICH PREVIOUSLY ACCOUNTED FOR BETWEEN 25 TO 45 PERCENT OF TOTAL MAIZE PRODUCTION -- MUCH FOR ON-FARM CONSUMPTION AND STOCK FEED-- WOULD BE POOR.

17. OVERALL, AGGREGATE NATIONAL MAIZE PRODUCTION IS EXPECTED TO BE HIGHER THAN LAST YEAR, ALTHOUGH WELL BELOW NATIONAL CONSUMPTION NEEDS. EARLY INDICATIONS ARE THAT THE HARVEST WILL BE IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD OF ONE MILLION MT OR MORE. IF CORRECT, THIS ESTIMATE WOULD BE ROUGHLY 60 PERCENT OF NATIONAL CONSUMPTION REQUIREMENTS, AND ABOUT HALF THE LEVEL OF 2000 (ALTHOUGH IT WOULD BE ROUGHLY DOUBLE THE 2002 LEVEL).

IMPLICATIONS FOR FOOD SECURITY AND LIVELIHOODS

18. WHILE MOST HOUSEHOLDS HAVE WEATHERED THE CRISIS UP TO NOW, AS ZIMBABWE ENTERS ITS THIRD CONSECUTIVE YEAR OF POOR HARVESTS, FOOD SHORTAGES AND ECONOMIC DECLINE, TEAMS ENCOUNTERED CLEAR EVIDENCE THAT COPING MECHANISMS HAVE BEEN INCREASINGLY DEPLETED. MANY HOUSEHOLDS, PRIOR TO RECEIVING FOOD AID, WERE RESORTING TO ADVERSE COPING MECHANISMS SUCH AS SELLING PRODUCTIVE ASSETS, CONSUMING UNHEALTHY FOODS, WITHDRAWING CHILDREN FROM SCHOOL AND PROSTITUTION.

19. MANY OF THE HOUSEHOLDS VISITED WERE CHARACTERIZED BY UNUSUALLY HIGH NUMBERS OF ORPHANS, ABSENCE OF WORKING AGE MEN AND DISPROPORTIONATE NUMBERS OF WIDOWS, ELDERLY AND CHILD HEADS OF HOUSEHOLDS. IN THE CONTEXT OF THE GENERAL DISINTEGRATION OF THE ZIMBABWEAN ECONOMY, FURTHER DEPLETION OF RURAL HOUSEHOLD ASSETS AND EROSION OF BASIC RURAL LIVELIHOODS COULD LEAD TO INCREASED MORTALITY AND REDUCED CAPACITY TO RECOVER IF AND WHEN CONDITIONS BECOME MORE FAVORABLE.

PROJECTED EMERGENCY FOOD NEEDS IN 2003/04

110. UNDER THE 2002/03 EMERGENCY OPERATION (EMOP), WFP ESTIMATED THAT THE TOTAL POPULATION IN NEED OF FOOD AID WOULD PEAK AT 7.2 MILLION BY MARCH 2003 AND THEN DROP OFF IN APRIL 2003 AS THE NEW HARVEST CAME IN. WFP ACTUAL DISTRIBUTION LEVELS WERE CONSISTENTLY FAR LESS THAN PLANNED LEVELS DUE TO PIPELINE AND CAPACITY CONSTRAINTS. NEVERTHELESS, WFP DISTRIBUTED 53,000 MT IN MARCH 2003 TO 4.6 MILLION BENEFICIARIES (DISTRIBUTIONS THROUGH OTHER PIPELINES BROUGHT THE TOTAL NUMBER OF BENEFICIARIES TO 5.7 MILLION). DISTRIBUTION LEVELS ARE EXPECTED TO FALL BY ABOUT 60 PERCENT IN MAY AND JUNE 2003. WFP HAS INDICATED THAT IT WILL USE THIS HARVEST PERIOD TO DEVELOP MORE REFINED TARGETING CRITERIA TO ENSURE THAT AID IS PROVIDED TO THOSE MOST IN NEED. THIS SITUATION WILL REQUIRE RENEWED EMPHASIS ON MONITORING WFP AND OTHER NGO PROGRAM OPERATIONS TO ENSURE THAT MORE SPECIFIC TARGETING CRITERIA ARE PROPERLY ADHERED TO.

111. GIVEN THE COMBINATION OF POOR PRODUCTION, DISFUNCTIONAL FOOD MARKETS AND THE BROADER EFFECTS OF THE HIV/AIDS AND ECONOMIC CRISES, THE TOTAL NUMBER OF ZIMBABWEANS REQUIRING FOOD AID BETWEEN JULY 2003 AND MARCH 2004 WILL BE SIGNIFICANT, ALTHOUGH AT THIS TIME THE NUMBER IS UNQUANTIFIABLE. SEVERE SHORTAGES OF FOOD IN LOCAL MARKETS REMAIN A MAJOR ELEMENT OF THE CRISIS. AT THE CORE OF THE FOOD AVAILABILITY PROBLEM ARE GOZ POLICIES, INCLUDING THE GMB MONOPOLY ON MAIZE IMPORTS AND SALES AND UNREALISTICALLY LOW FIXED PRICES FOR STRATEGIC FOOD COMMODITIES SUCH AS MAIZE AND WHEAT.

112. WHILE GMB'S PERFORMANCE OVER THE PAST YEAR WAS AT BEST ERRATIC, IT NONETHELESS DID DELIVER A

SUBSTANTIAL TONNAGE OF FOOD (APPROXIMATELY DOUBLE THE AMOUNT OF INTERNATIONAL FOOD AID) INTO THE MARKETS (BOTH THROUGH OFFICIAL SALES AND BLACK MARKET DIVERSIONS). BUT GIVEN THE DIRE FOREIGN EXCHANGE POSITION IN WHICH THE GOZ NOW FINDS ITSELF, THE GMB IS EXPECTED TO HAVE LESS CAPACITY TO IMPORT FOOD OVER THE NEXT TWELVE MONTHS. WHILE MAIZE PRODUCTION MAY IMPROVE THIS YEAR IN MORE PRODUCTIVE AREAS, HOUSEHOLDS ARE UNLIKELY TO BE WILLING TO SELL TO GMB AT CONTROLLED PRICES UNLESS COERCED. THESE FACTORS WILL SIGNIFICANTLY REDUCE MARKET MAIZE AND WHEAT SUPPLIES, MAKING IT INCREASINGLY DIFFICULT FOR HOUSEHOLDS IN BOTH URBAN AND RURAL AREAS TO ACCESS FOOD.

13. AMONG THE MOST VULNERABLE, THE PLIGHT OF UP TO 1.5 MILLION EX-COMMERCIAL FARM WORKERS AND THEIR FAMILY MEMBERS REMAINS A PRIORITY HUMANITARIAN CONCERN. LACK OF ACCESS TO EX-COMMERCIAL FARMS REMAINS AN OBSTACLE TO CONDUCTING A CREDIBLE ASSESSMENT OF NEEDS.

RECOMMENDATIONS

14. FOR ZIMBABWE TO EMERGE FROM THE CURRENT FOOD SECURITY CRISIS, EMERGENCY FOOD AID IN 2003-04 WOULD HAVE TO BE ACCOMPANIED BY SERIOUS POLICY REFORMS TO IMPROVE THE SUPPLY OF GRAIN FOR SALE IN LOCAL MARKETS AND ENSURE ACCESS TO INPUTS NEEDED TO INCREASE PLANTED AREAS. THE FOLLOWING ARE DCHA TEAM RECOMMENDATIONS:

A. PROVIDE TARGETED FOOD AID FOR THE PERIOD JULY 2003 THROUGH MARCH 2004 FOR RURAL AREAS WHERE ASSETS HAVE BEEN DEPLETED AND CURRENT YEAR PRODUCTION PROSPECTS ARE POOR.

B. BEGIN A TRANSITION FROM GENERAL FOOD DISTRIBUTIONS TO MORE TARGETED DISTRIBUTION MECHANISMS INCLUDING FOOD-FOR-WORK.

C. EXPLORE WAYS TO PROVIDE FOOD ASSISTANCE FOR VULNERABLE URBAN/PERI-URBAN HOUSEHOLDS THROUGH MARKET CHANNELS.

D. CONTINUE TO FOCUS ON THE PROVISION OF SEEDS FOR COMMUNAL FARMERS, AND SUPPORT FOR HUMANITARIAN COORDINATION AND MONITORING OF DONOR FOOD DISTRIBUTION.

E. MAINTAIN PRESSURE ON THE GOZ TO PROVIDE ACCESS TO RESETTLED FARM AREAS SO THAT THE UNMET NEEDS OF EX-COMMERCIAL FARM WORKERS CAN BE MET BEFORE THEIR SITUATION DETERIORATES FURTHER.

F. MAINTAIN PRESSURE ON THE GOZ TO ENACT POLICY REFORMS THAT ALLOW FOOD MARKETS TO OPERATE EFFECTIVELY AND INCREASE MARKET AVAILABILITY OF FOOD.

G. DEVELOP A MEDIUM-TERM FOOD SECURITY RECOVERY STRATEGY FOR ZIMBABWE THAT PROMOTES CROP DIVERSIFICATION (MORE EXTENSIVE USE OF DROUGHT-TOLERANT CROPS/VARIETIES) AND IMPROVED WATER MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES.

MISSION COMMENT

15. IT MUST BE NOTED THAT ESTIMATES OF PROJECTED CROP HARVESTS AND SHORTFALLS ARE CURRENTLY A PRIME OBJECT OF SPECULATION IN HARARE. FEWSNET HAS RELEASED ESTIMATES THAT PROJECT A MAIZE HARVEST OF APPROXIMATELY 1.3 MILLION MT. IN SUBSEQUENT INTERVIEWS WITH USAID/HARARE STAFF, HOWEVER, FEWSNET SAID THAT THE FIGURE IS PROBABLY CLOSER TO 1.1 MILLION MT, AS THEIR PREVIOUS (MARCH) ESTIMATES HAD NOT SUFFICIENTLY TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT THE SUBSTANTIAL NUMBER OF FAILED LATE-YEAR PLANTINGS. (IN ADDITION, THE GOZ CLAIMS TO HAVE CONTRACTED FOR AN ADDITIONAL 225,000MT NOT YET DELIVERED.) ON THE OTHER HAND, CURRENT NON-OFFICIAL GOVERNMENT ESTIMATES RANGE AS HIGH AS 1.5 MILLION MT; HOWEVER, THE CREDIBILITY OF THESE LATTER ESTIMATES SUFFERS SERIOUSLY DUE TO GOVERNMENT'S KNOWN DESIRE TO CLAIM SUCCESS IN ITS DISASTROUS LAND REDISTRIBUTION PROGRAM. A MORE ACCURATE DETERMINATION OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION YIELDS AND ASSISTANCE NEEDS WILL BE POSSIBLE ONCE ON-GOING ASSESSMENTS ARE COMPLETED. THE MOST SIGNIFICANT AND CREDIBLE OF THESE IS THE JOINT WFP/FAO CROP AND FOOD SUPPLY ASSESSMENT MISSION (CFSAM) NOW UNDERWAY (WITH FEWSNET ASSISTANCE), WITH RESULTS EXPECTED BY LATE-MAY. IN ADDITION, MULTIPLE U.N. AGENCIES, GOZ, NGOS, FEWSNET AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONS ARE CURRENTLY COMPLETING THE LATEST UPDATE OF THE NATIONAL VULNERABILITY ASSESSMENT (VAC), WITH RESULTS EXPECTED ALSO BY LATE-MAY. FINALLY, THE RESULTS OF THE NATIONAL NUTRITION AND EPI (CHILD

IMMUNIZATION) SURVEY, COMPLETED BY UNICEF AND THE GOZ, ARE ALSO EXPECTED TO BE RELEASED SHORTLY. HENCE, THE MISSION EXPECTS TO HAVE MORE CREDIBLE INFORMATION ON THE CURRENT/PROJECTED COUNTRY FOOD SECURITY SITUATION WITHIN THE NEXT FEW WEEKS. WE WILL ADVISE WHEN RECEIVED. SULLIVAN